

I started by selecting a diverse, well-qualified Cabinet and senior staff. People like Colin Powell, Rod Paige, Condoleezza Rice, and Larry Thompson are tearing down barriers and setting new standards for excellence. Appointments are important, but so is the agenda.

I've made reform of our public schools my number one priority. I have worked closely with Democrats and Republicans in Congress to craft a bill that gives our schools more money but asks our schools for more in return. High standards, accountability, and a culture of excellence is the hallmark of school reform. Every child can learn, and no child should be left behind. I believe my education package is an important step in ensuring that our schools are worthy of our children's dreams.

And my agenda also includes moving forward on my Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. All across the country, private religious and community organizations are serving and uplifting the Nation's poor through a variety of services, from feeding the hungry to providing drug treatment to educating children with disabilities. Our Faith-Based and Community Initiative reflects my belief that Government must be active enough to support these charitable groups but humble enough to let good people in local communities provide such services.

Finally, my agenda is based on the principle of equal opportunity and equal justice. Yet, for too long, too many African-Americans have been subjected to the unfairness of racial profiling. That's why, earlier this year, I asked Attorney General John Ashcroft to develop specific recommendations to end racial profiling. It's wrong, and it must be ended in America.

There are other ways my agenda will help ensure that the American Dream touches every willing heart, from creating opportunities for affordable housing and health care to encouraging savings and reducing taxes on working people. But throughout, my agenda is laced with some common themes: trusting the people, empowering communities and charities, and creating one nation of justice and equality.

It matters what Presidents do. It also matters what Presidents say and how they say

it. I've tried to speak in a tone that brings us together and unites us in purpose. I believe that even when disagreements arise, we should treat each other with civility and with respect. That is a basic requirement of democracy.

When he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., said that whenever he was on an airplane, he was always reminded of how dependent we all are on each other. He said, "A flight is successful only because of the hard work and devotion of the known pilots and unknown ground crew." His point was that we all have a role to play, and we cannot succeed as a group unless each one of us succeeds as an individual.

As the President of one of the most diverse nations in the world, I carry the responsibility of making sure that every voice is heard and every person is respected. This is the legacy and the unfinished work of Lincoln, King, and so many others, in ways large and small, have brought us to where we are today. They dreamt of a unified America. Now we must continue to work to convert that dream into a reality.

I hope you have a productive and successful convention. And I look forward to working with you on matters that are vital to America.

God bless you all, and God bless America.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at approximately 3 p.m. on July 2 in the Library at the White House for later transmission to the convention in New Orleans, LA. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 9.

Remarks at an Immigration and Naturalization Service Ceremony on Ellis Island, New York

July 10, 2001

Thank you very much, Mr. Attorney General. I appreciate your kind words, and I appreciate your service to America. My fellow Americans who stand behind us, congratulations.

Just a few minutes ago, I was the leader of another country. Now it's my honor to speak to you as the leader of your country.

And the great thing about America is, you don't have to listen unless you want to. [Laughter]

Governor Pataki, it's great to be with you. Mayor Giuliani, thank you both for your kind comments. Senator Schumer—Charles Ellis Schumer, who was named for Ellis Island—and Senator Clinton, thank you all for being here. Congressman Fossella and Congresswoman Maloney, thank you for being here. Assistant Attorney General Dinh, thank you for your service to our country. I made a great appointment when I picked him. Silvia Sanchez, thank you for singing the national anthem. And ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor to be here.

I'm pleased to be joined by two members of my Cabinet who are Americans by choice, Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Mel Martinez.

This little piece of land, less than 30 acres in all, is like no other place in America. Twelve million souls arrived here and would speak of the experience for the rest of their lives. They remembered the difficulties along with the joys. They remembered the long lines—never longer than on a single day in 1907, when more than 11,000 new immigrants filed through this hall. They remembered how loud it was here and how confusing.

There was no President to greet them, only people with clipboards, stethoscopes, and a lot of questions. A man from Italy describes seeing the Statue of Liberty for the first time. He said, "The thrill was unbelievable—but always the fear because you had to go through Ellis Island." For all that, they kept hoping; they kept believing; and they kept coming. And 100 million Americans can draw a straight line from the life they know today to a moment in this hall, when a name was called and a person took the first step toward citizenship in the United States of America. Each of you took that first step sometime ago. Several of you have been here for decades.

This group of new Americans includes students, teachers, a restaurant owner, a professor, a bartender, an insurance agent, a doctor, and a violinist. For all of you, the oath of citizenship is more than a formality.

And today America is more than your home; it's your country. This is one of the things that makes our country so unique. With a single oath, all at once, you become as fully American as the most direct descendant of a Founding Father.

The Founders themselves decided that when they declared independence and wrote our Constitution. You see, citizenship is not limited by birth or background. America at its best is a welcoming society. We welcome not only immigrants themselves but the many gifts they bring and the values they live by. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants take the oath of citizenship every year. Each has come not only to take but to give. They come asking for a chance to work hard, support their families, and to rise in the world. And together, they make our Nation more, not less, American.

Immigration is not a problem to be solved. It is a sign of a confident and successful nation. And people who seek to make America their home should be met in that spirit by representatives of our Government. New arrivals should be greeted not with suspicion and resentment but with openness and courtesy.

As many immigrants can testify, that standard has not always been observed. For those seeking entry, the process is often a prolonged ordeal full of complexities and burdens. I'm committed to changing this with INS reforms that treat every immigrant with respect and fairness.

Today here's the goal for the INS: a 6-month standard from start to finish for processing applications for immigration. It won't be achievable in every case, but it's the standard of this administration, and I expect the INS to meet it.

Not every applicant is entitled to admission, but every applicant is entitled to a timely and courteous review of his or her case. We can help legal immigrants in other ways. If a child's parent and financial sponsor should pass away, we should permit the other parent to take over as a sponsor. And in the case of a minor child, entitlement to a visa should be measured by the age on the date of the application, not on the date the INS has finally processed the visa.

And we should spare families the hardship of separation while one member is awaiting a green card. I support providing an extension of the temporary window that allows people to file for legal residency without having to return to their country of origin. And I urge the Members of the United States Congress to act swiftly on 245(i) reform.

In the life of an immigrant, citizenship is a defining event. In the life of our Nation, new citizens bring renewal. By taking an oath, as you have done today, immigrants affirm a belief in the American creed. For most Americans, there's no formal moment of affirmation, but to each of us fall the same responsibilities. Our democracy's sustained by the moral commitments we share: reverence for justice and obedience to the law, tolerance and decent respect for the opinions of others, responsibility not only to ourselves but for our families and neighborhoods, love of country shown not in prideful boasts but in modest gratitude, and an active concern for our Nation's future.

That future depends on the values of self-government, our sense of duty, loyalty, self-confidence, and regard for the common good. We're a diverse country and getting more diverse. And these virtues are what keeps this great country together. Believing in them and living by them, this great land will always be united.

When they left behind the old world, the millions who landed here at Ellis Island came with a vision of a better life. They sought more than economic opportunity, though that was surely part of it. They wanted more than political freedom, though that was crucial. Above all, they wanted the rights, the duties, and the dignity of American citizenship. This place is now a museum, but it stands for a living tradition. And on Ellis Island today, the great hope of America is renewed.

Since becoming the President, I've gotten to do a lot of really fascinating things. There's nothing like—quite like the event this morning. So will you please join me, and rise, as we say the Pledge of Allegiance.

Right hand up, please. Actually, right hand on your heart. *[Laughter]*

[At this point, the President led the participants in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.]

Congratulations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:55 a.m. in the Registry Room. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York; Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani of New York City; and singer Silvia Sanchez.

Remarks on the Posthumous Presentation of the Congressional Gold Medal to John Cardinal O'Connor in New York City

July 10, 2000

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your Eminence; Governor Pataki and Mrs. Pataki; Mayor Giuliani. I want to thank Chuck Schumer and Vito Fossella for such beautiful words. Senator Clinton; distinguished Members of the United States Congress; members of my Cabinet; Mary Ward, Dorothy Hamilton, and members of the O'Connor family; Reverend Ogilvie and Father Coughlin; leaders of the Catholic Church; Maureen O'Flynn, thank you for sharing your angelic voice with us today. My fellow Americans.

Thank you for the welcome to your city and to the seat of this archdiocese. I especially want to thank the police and fire departments for their presentation of the colors and their service to this community.

John Cardinal O'Connor was fond of recalling the greeting he received when visiting the Vatican. Pope John Paul II would meet him with these words: "How is the Archbishop of the capital of the world?" For me, on my first visit as President, it's a pleasure, Mr. Mayor, to be in the capital of the world.

This is a happier occasion than the day when we said our goodbyes at a solemn Mass in a mourning city. It takes a lot to bring all of New York to a pause, but that's what happened when the earthly remains of John Cardinal O'Connor were laid to rest in this beautiful cathedral.

From the distance of a year, his character and his contributions only seem larger. We remember a life of good works, strong faith, and great influence.

For many here today, those memories are still vivid and very personal. For parishioners, it may be the memory of an imposing figure who stood here so many times, looking every